

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 VICTOR 00445 220524Z
ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-08 ISO-00 HA-01 ACDA-10 SS-14 INR-05
MCT-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 NSC-05 IO-06 PM-03 DODE-00
/060 W

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R 171115Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY VICTORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0911
INFO AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
CINCPAC

S E C R E T VICTORIA 0445

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, SE
SUBJECT: SEYCHELLES' PRESIDENT RENE ON EXTERNAL THREAT

REF: VICTORIA 436 AND PREVIOUS

1. IN COURSE HOUR-LONG MAY 17 MEETING, SEYCHELLES' PRESIDENT
F.A. RENE TOLD CHARGE THAT HE IS CONVINCED THAT SHIP ALLEGEDLY
PURCHASED TO TRANSPORT MERCENARIES TO SEYCHELLES IS STILL IN
MOMBASA HARBOR. RENE SAID BERTHING FACILITIES ABOARD "A VENTURA"
(WHICH ORIGINALLY HAD 20 CABINS) HAD RECENTLY BEEN INCREASED.
RENE ADDED THAT HE HAD JUST OBTAINED A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE SHIP
AND THAT THREE DAYS AGO VESSEL WENT INTO DRY DOCK IN MOMBASA.
ALTHOUGH RENE CLAIMED GOS HAS BEEN PROVIDING DETAILED INFORMATION

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ABOUT SHIP TO KENYAN GOVERNMENT OVER PAST TWO WEEKS, KENYANS
HAVE NOT RESPONDED TO OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE AND, AT THIS POINT,
RENE SAID HE DOES NOT EXPECT THAT GOK WILL DO SO.

2. ACCORDING RENE, AFTER THREE QUESTIONABLE TRANSACTIONS,
VESSEL IS CURRENTLY REGISTERED IN NAME OF LAWRENCE SHERMOD, WHOM
RENE CHARACTERIZED AS A SEYCHELLOIS HAVING HISTORY OF INVOLVEMENT

IN SHADY BUSINESS DEALS IN EAST AFRICA. RENE, REFERRING TO HIS SOURCES OF INFORMATION IN KENYA, SAID THAT TWO MERCENARY CONTINGENTS WERE IN KENYA RECENTLY. THE LARGER GROUP, HE SAID, COMPOSED MAINLY OF EX-FRENCH SERVICEMEN, WAS SOMEHOW CONNECTED WITH THE INVASION OF ZAIRE'S SHABA PROVINCE AND A SECOND GROUP OF ABOUT SIXTY MERCENARIES WAS ASSEMBLED TO INVADE SEYCHELLES. RENE SAID HE HAS "REASON TO BELIEVE" THAT NUMBER OF DEFECTIONS HAVE OCCURRED AMONG MERCENARIES ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN RECRUITED FOR SEYCHELLES OPERATION, AND HE HAS BEEN INFORMED THAT SOME HAVE RETURNED TO FRANCE. HE SUSPECTS OTHERS MAY HAVE JOINED LARGER MERCENARY FORCE.

3. COMMENT: EMBASSY IS OBVIOUSLY NOT IN A POSITION TO EVALUATE WHETHER THERE IS ANY SUBSTANCE AT ALL TO GOS CLAIMS ABOUT EXTERNAL THREAT. ONE POINT WORTH NOTING, HOWEVER, IS THAT IN SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS WITH PRESIDENT RENE, FIVE MINISTERS AND SEVERAL OTHER GOS OFFICIALS OVER NEARLY THREE-WEEK PERIOD, IMPRESSION THAT MERCENARY-MOUNTED ASSAULT WAS REAL AND IMMINENT DANGER WAS UNIFORMLY CONVEYED AND WITH APPARENT SINCERITY. RENE APPEARED RELAXED AND EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT RECENT DETENTIONS HAD UPSET PLANS BY EXILED FORMER LEADERS OF DEPOSED GOVERNMENT TO MOUNT MERCENARY ASSAULT PRIOR TO JUNE 5 ANNIVERSARY OF COUP D'ETAT. HE INDICATED BELIEF, HOWEVER, THAT ANTI-GOVERNMENT PLOTTING ABROAD WILL CONTINUE ALTHOUGH DIFFERENT TACTICS MAY BE ADOPTED. FACT THAT EVER SINCE POLICE CRACKDOWN OF APRIL 29-30 ALL MINISTERS AND SOME OTHER HIGH GOS OFFICIALS CAN BE OBSERVED CARRYING REVOLVERS CONCEALED IN LEATHER CASES SUGGESTS POLITICAL ASSASSINATION IS REGARDED AS A SERIOUS
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THREAT.
MATTSON

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